In the claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of establishing an audio call path between an Internet user accessing a web site through the Internet and an agent of a plurality of agents associated with the web site, such method comprising the steps of:

providing the web site with a plurality of audio access icons each disposed on a respective web page of the web site;

detecting activation of an audio access icon of the plurality of icons by the Internet user as a help request;

~~providing the Internet user with a message requesting that the Internet user wait for the next available agent;~~

searching for an agent of the plurality of agents in a context where a terminal of the agent functions as a web site and where ~~determining an overall type of question associated with~~ the activated audio-access icon functions as an additional search term used along with ~~from~~ an information content of the web page of the activated audio access icon ~~and from a context of prior interactions between the Internet user and the web site~~;

selecting an agent of the plurality of agents with a best relative ability to answer the determined type of question based upon ~~a skills list for the plurality of agents~~ the search; and

establishing a voice path through the Internet using IP telephony between Internet voice plug-ins of the user and the selected agent.

2.   (Original) The method as in claim 1 further comprising providing a plurality of informational web pages for access by the user.

3.   (Original) The method as in claim 2 further comprising disposing an audio access icon of the plurality of audio access icons on at least some web pages of the plurality of informational web pages.

4.   (Previously Presented) The method as in claim 1 wherein the step of selecting an agent further comprises correlating a training level of   each agent   of the plurality of agents with the subject matter of each audio-access icon.

5.   (Currently Amended) The method as in claim 1 wherein the step of establishing a call path between the user and the selected agent further comprises placing an Internet address of the user in a call queue of the─ ─the selected agent until the selected agent becomes available.

6.   (Original) The method as in claim 1 wherein the step ·of establishing an call path between the user and an agent of the associated agent group based upon activation of a audio-access icon further comprises placing the user in a call queue of the associated group until a next available agent becomes available.

7.   (Previously Presented) The method as in claim 6 further comprising comparing the measured time with · a threshold value and overflowing the user to a queue of

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another agent of the plurality of agents when the measured time exceeds the threshold.

8. (Previously Presented) The method as in claim 1 wherein the determination of the type of question further comprises detecting entry of information through a previously visited webpage.

9. (Previously Presented) The method as in claim 1 wherein the step of establishing a call path between the user and the agent of the plurality of agents based upon activation of the audio-access icon further comprises transferring an Internet address of the selected agent to the user.

10. (Previously Presented) The method as in claim 1 wherein the step of establishing a call path between the user and the agent of the plurality of agents based upon activation of the audio-access icon further comprises transferring an Internet address of the user to the selected agent.

11. (Original) The method as in claim 9 wherein the step of establishing an call path between the user and an agent of the associated agent group based upon activation of a audio-access icon further comprises transferring an Internet address of the user to the selected agent.

12. (Original) The method as in claim 1 further comprising collecting information from the user by a web site controller.

13. (Original) The method as in claim 12 wherein the step of collecting information from the user further comprises the web site controller decoding a web access request to recover a user Internet address.

14. (Original) The method as in claim 12 wherein the step of collecting information from the user further comprises the web site controller opening a web page information entry window for receipt of information from the user.

15. (Previously Presented) The method as in claim 11 further comprising transferring the collected information from the user and an identifier of the selected agent of the plurality of agents to a database of the web site.

16. (Original) The method as in claim 12 further comprising transferring the collected information and an identifier of the selected agent to a database of the web site and plurality of agent groups.

17. (Original) The method as in claim 16 further comprising retrieving customer records of the user from the database.

18. (Currently Amended) A method of servicing an inquiry from a user through the Internet, such method comprising the steps of:

providing a web site with a plurality of audio access icons and at least some web pages with an audio access icon of the plurality of audio access icons associated with each web page of the at least some web pages;

associating an agent group with a subject matter of each audio-access icon of each of the at least some web pages;

detecting an activation of an audio-access icon of the plurality of icons by the user as a help request;

~~providing the Internet user with a message requesting that the Internet user wait for the next available agent;~~

searching for an agent of the agent groups in a context where a terminal of the agent functions as a web site and where ~~determining a type of problem associated with~~ the activated audio-access icon functions as an additional search term used along with ~~from~~ the subject matter of the activated audio access icon ~~and from a context of prior interactions between the user and the web site~~;

selecting an agent with a best relative ability to address the problem based upon the ~~determined type of problem and a skills list for the agent group~~ search; and

providing an call path through the Internet using IP telephony between Internet voice plug-ins of the user and the selected agent of the associated agent group.

19. (Currently Amended) A method of servicing an inquiry from a user through the Internet, such method comprising the steps of:

providing a web site with a plurality of web pages for access by the user;

providing an audio-access icon on at least some web pages of the web site;

associating an agent group with the at least some web pages;

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detecting activation by the user of an audio access icon provided on the at least some web pages as a help request;

~~providing the Internet user with a message requesting that the Internet user wait for the next available agent;~~

searching for an agent of the agent groups in a context where a terminal of the agent functions as a web site and where ~~determining a type of problem associated with~~ the activated audio-access icon functions as an additional search term used along with ~~from an~~ information content of the web page of the activated audio access icon ~~and from a context of prior interactions between the user and the web site~~;

selecting an agent with a best relative ability to address the determined type of problem based upon the searcha ~~skills list for the agent group~~; and

providing an call path through the Internet using IP telephony between Internet voice plug-ins of the user and the selected agent of the associated agent group.

20. (Currently Amended) Apparatus for establishing an audio call path between an Internet user accessing a web site through the Internet and an agent of a plurality of agents associated with the web site, such apparatus comprising:

means for providing a web site with a plurality of audio access icons each disposed on a respective web page of the web site;

means for detecting activation of an audio access icon of the plurality of icons by the Internet user as a help request;

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~~means for providing the Internet user with a message requesting that the Internet user wait for the next available agent~~;

means for_searching for an agent of the agent groups in a context where a terminal of the agent functions as a web site and where ~~determining a type of problem associated with~~ the activated audio-access icon_functions as an additional search term used along with ~~from an~~ information content of the web page of the activated audio access icon ~~and from a context of prior interactions between the user and the web site~~;

means for selecting an agent with a best relative ability to address the determined type of problem based upon_the search ~~a skills list for the plurality of agents~~; and

means for establishing a call path through the Internet using IP telephony between Internet voice plug-ins of the user and the selected agent of the plurality of agents.

21. (Original) The apparatus as in claim 20 further comprising means for providing a plurality of informational web pages for access by the user.

22. (Original) The apparatus as in claim 21 further comprising means for disposing an audio access icon of the plurality of audio access icons on at least some web pages of the plurality of information web pages.

23. (Previously Presented) The apparatus as in claim 22 wherein the means for selecting an agent further comprises means for correlating a training level of each agent of

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the plurality of agents   with the subject matter of each audio-access icon.

24.   (Currently Amended) The apparatus as in claim 20 wherein the means for establishing a call path between the user and the selected agent further comprises means for placing an Internet address of the user in a call queue of the——the selected agent until the selected agent becomes available.

25.   (Currently Amended) The ~~method~~ apparatus as in claim 19 further comprising means for measuring a time period that the user has been in the call queue.

26.   (Previously Presented) The apparatus as in claim 25 further comprising means for comparing the measured time with a threshold value and overflowing the user to a queue of another agent   of the plurality of agents   when the measured time exceeds the threshold.

27.   (Currently Amended) The apparatus as in claim ~~19~~ 20 wherein the means for determining a type of question further comprises means for   detecting entry of information through a previously visited webpage.

28.   (Currently Amended) The apparatus as in claim ~~19~~ 20 wherein the means for establishing a call path between the user and the agent of the   plurality of agents   based upon activation of the audio-access icon further comprises means for transferring an Internet address of the selected agent to the user.

29. (Currently Amended) The apparatus as in claim ~~19~~ 20 wherein the means for establishing an call path between the user and an agent of the plurality of agents based upon activation of a audio-access icon further comprises means for transferring an Internet address of the user to the selected agent.

30. (Original) The apparatus as in claim 21 further comprising means for collecting information from the user by a web site controller.

31. (Original) The apparatus as in claim 30 wherein the means for collecting information from the user further comprises means within the web site controller for decoding a web access request to recover a user Internet address.

32. (Original) The apparatus as in claim 30 wherein the means for collecting information from the user further comprises means within the web site controller for opening a web page information entry window for receipt of information from the user.

33. (Original) The apparatus as in claim 34 wherein the means for collecting information from the user further comprises means for receiving a credit card number from the user through the web page information entry window.

34. (Previously Presented) The apparatus as in claim 30 further comprising means for transferring the collected information and an identifier of the selected agent to a database of the web site.

35. (Original) The apparatus as in claim 34 further comprising means for retrieving customer records of the user from the database.

36. (Original) The apparatus as in claim 35 further comprising means for displaying the customer records at a terminal of the selected agent.

37. (Currently Amended) Apparatus for establishing an audio call path between an Internet user accessing a web site through the Internet and an agent of a plurality of agents associated with the web site, such apparatus comprising:

a web site with a plurality of audio access icons and a plurality of agent groups;

a call distribution controller operably coupled to the web site which associates an agent group of the plurality of agent groups with a subject matter of each audio-access icon of the web site;

~~detecting activation of~~ an audio access icon of the plurality of icons that is activated by the Internet user as a help request;

~~providing the Internet user with a message requesting that the Internet user wait for the next available agent;~~

a web application that searches for an agent of the plurality of agent groups in the context where a terminal of the agent functions as a web site and where ~~determining a type of problem associated with~~ the activated audio-access icon functions as an additional search term used along with ~~from an~~ information content of the respective web page of the activated audio access icon ~~and from a~~

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~~context of prior interactions between the Internet user and the web site~~;

      selecting an agent of the agent group associated with the activated icon with a best relative ability to address the problem based upon the__search__ ~~determined type of problem and a skills list for the agent group~~; and

      a local area network which establishes a call path through the Internet using IP telephony between Internet voice plug-ins of the user and the selected agent of the associated agent group.

38. (Original) The apparatus as in claim 37 further comprising a web site controller which provides a plurality of informational web pages for access by the user.

39. (Original) The apparatus as in claim 38 further comprising a display controller coupled to the web site controller which disposes an audio access icon of the plurality of audio access icons on at least some web pages of the plurality of informational web pages.

40. (Original) The apparatus as in claim 39 further comprising a display look-up table in a memory of the web site controller which relates an information content of each web page of the at least some web pages with the audio-access icon disposed on the web page.

41. (Currently Amended) The ~~method~~ __apparatus__ as in claim 40 wherein the call distribution controller which associates an agent group with each icon further comprises a call distribution look-up table which correlates a training level of an agent group of the plurality of agent

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groups with an information content of an audio-access icon of the at least some web pages.

42.   (Original) The apparatus as in claim 37 wherein the local area network which establishes an call path between the user and an agent of the associated agent group based upon activation of a audio-access icon further comprises a setup controller which places the user in a call queue of the associated group until a next available agent becomes available.

43.   (Original) The apparatus as in claim 42 further comprising a timer within the call distribution controller which measures a time period that the user has been in the call queue.

44.   (Original) The apparatus as in claim 43 further comprising a comparator within the call distribution controller which compares the measured time with a threshold value and which overflows the user to a queue of another agent group when the measured time exceeds the threshold.

45.   (Original) The apparatus as in claim 37 further comprising an agent activity controller which selects the agent from the associated agent group.

46.   (Original) The apparatus as in claim 45 wherein the local area network which establishes an call path between the user and an agent of the associated agent group based upon activation of a audio-access icon further comprises an agent transfer controller coupled to the call distribution

controller which transfers an Internet address of the selected agent to the user.

47. (Original) The apparatus as in claim 46 wherein the local area network which establishes an call path between the user and an agent of the associated agent group based upon activation of a audio-access icon further comprises a user transfer controller which transfers an Internet address of the user to the selected agent.

48. (Original) The apparatus as in claim 37 further comprising an interrogation processor which collects user information.

49. (Original) The apparatus as in claim 48 wherein the interrogation processor further comprises a packet decoder which decodes web site access requests to recover a user Internet address.

50. (Original) The apparatus as in claim 49 wherein the interrogation processor further comprises an entry window processor coupled to the web site controller for opening a web page information entry window for receipt of information from the user.

51. (Original) The apparatus as in claim 50 wherein the interrogation processor further comprises a memory coupled to the interrogation processor which stores information received from the user through the web page information entry window.

52. (Original) The apparatus as in claim 51 further comprising a database coupled to the call distribution processor for storing customer records.

53. (Original) The apparatus as in claim 52 further comprising a communications processor which transfers the information collected from the user and an identifier of the selected agent to a database of the web site.

54. (Original) The apparatus as in claim 53 further comprising a database processor coupled to the database which retrieves customer records of the user from the database based upon the information collected from the user and transferred to the database.

55. (Original) The apparatus as in claim 54 further comprising an agent terminal which displays the customer records to the selected agent.